

More contentions/FAQ

In this section, we present answers to some frequently asked questions regarding the FDG issue, and discuss some further contentious points that have thus far not been addressed in our book. Some of these questions and points brought up are from raging debates on social media or from emails sent by different individuals to us over the past several years.

FDG Institutionalization concept - refuted

Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Hansadutta - Answered

Question: In his letter to Hansadūṭṭa, Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that anyone with a Bhaktivedanta degree can initiate others? So why can't *vaiṣṇavīs* with higher standards become *dikṣā-gurus*?

Answer: Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Hansadutta, dated January 3, 1969, which is then cited as evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted FDGs, must be considered in line with the principle of *śāstra* as the center for all. Hence, we have to consider that the kind of guru that Śrīla Prabhupāda had in mind was the kind who is a resident of Kṛṣṇa Lokā. This comports with the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42 - 44), which says that a woman or a *sūdra* cannot become *dikṣā-guru* unless they have direct realization of the Lord.

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa, quoting these very *śloka*s in his *vaiṣṇavas-nandini* commentary on SB 1.13.15 remarks directly that women or *sūdras* cannot become the gurus of those on a higher status unless they have directly realized the Lord, like Yamarāja (who incarnates on earth as Vidura). So, to be in line with *śāstra* and also with Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa, we have to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter in the light of *śāstra*. Hence, the type of guru that Śrīla Prabhupāda had in mind, specifically in regards to women and *sūdras*, when he wrote this letter was someone who was highly realized, a “resident of Kṛṣṇa Lokā.” We have already explained this concept in detail in previous sections.

FDG Institutionalization – refuted

Question: Female devotees who have Bhakti-vedānta or Bhakti-sārvabhauma degrees can act as gurus, as Śrīla Prabhupāda had indicated (in his letter to Hansadutta). When Professor O'Connell raised the question: "Are ladies prohibited from being professors?" Śrīla Prabhupāda said "No." So like that, if anyone wants to serve as a *dīkṣā-guru*, why can't we have a standard that they pass an exam and become a *dīkṣā-guru* or something like that?

Answer: The pro-FDG camp uses Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters and conversations as the primary evidence to institutionalize FDGs and hence acts against the statements contained in his purport to Cc Madhya 20.352, which gives us the principle of *śāstra* as the center for all. The pro-FDG camp also does not care for scriptural injunctions given in the *Nārada Pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* which prohibits the institutionalization of female *dīkṣā-gurus*. As a result, they are not only not fully following Śrīla Prabhupāda, but also they divorce Śrīla Prabhupāda from his instructions to keep *śāstra* as the center for all and from the statements of previous *ācāryas*.

We have already cited the reference from predecessor *ācāryas* and established that the kind of guru that Śrīla Prabhupāda was referring to in Hansadutta's correspondence was certainly not a *dīkṣā-guru*. Similarly, Professor O'Connell's question regarding ladies being professors does not refer to them becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* since becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* is not the same as earning a degree to become a professor. Whether a female can become a guru or not is clearly answered in the *Nārada Pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (1.43-44). According to those injunctions only those women who are on the level of *pratyakṣitātmanāthānām* (Śrīla Baladeva Vidhyābhūṣṇa defines this as seeing the Lord face to face) are eligible to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. How do we identify such great personalities? This situation is very similar to the case of how to identify an incarnation of God. In Cc Madhya 20.354, Lord Caitanya states:

*prabhu kahe, — “anyāvatāra śāstra-dvāre jāni
kalite avatāra taiche śāstra-vākye māni*

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, “As in other ages an incarnation is accepted according to the directions of the śāstras, in this Age of Kali an incarnation of God should be accepted in that way. [Cc Madhya 20.352]

*avatāra nāhi kahe — ‘āmi avatāra’
muni saba jāni’ kare lakṣaṇa-vicāra*

“An actual incarnation of God never says ‘I am God’ or ‘I am an incarnation of God.’ The great sage Vyāsadeva, knowing all, has already recorded the characteristics of the avatāras in the śāstras. [Cc Madhya 20.354]

*‘svarūpa’-lakṣaṇa, āra ‘taṭastha-lakṣaṇa’
ei dui lakṣaṇe ‘vastu’ jāne muni-gaṇa*

“By two symptoms — personal characteristics and marginal characteristics — the great sages can understand an object. [Cc Madhya 20.356]

The same principle is also used to identify the great devotees of the Lord, such as Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. In the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* (1.19.28) we see that the great sages who were all experts in physiognomical calculations alone were able to identify Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who resembled the Lord in appearance. In his purport to SB 1.19.27 Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

His [Śukadeva Gosvāmī] bodily features indicate him to be different from common men. All the signs described in connection with the bodily features of Śukadeva Gosvāmī are uncommon symptoms, typical of great personalities, according to physiognomical calculations. His bodily hue resembled that of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the supreme among the gods, demigods and all living beings. [SB 1.19.27 purport]

Similarly, women on the level of *pratyakṣitātmanāthānām* must have personal characteristics (*svārūpa-lakṣaṇa*) and the marginal characteristics (*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*) on par with Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī or Śrīmatī Jāhnava-devī in order to act as *dikṣā-gurus*. Furthermore their activities (*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*) must match the symptoms of someone at the stage of *bhāva* and

prema as given in scriptures such as *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.3.25-26 and other places) and *Mādhurya-kadambini*. Unless we are experts in physiognomical calculations and identifying the symptoms of someone at the stage of *bhāva* and *prema* we cannot identify such great personalities capable of acting as *dīkṣā-gurus* through the institutional methods of academic exams.

FDG is not valid but VDG is valid - Answered

Question: The term FDG (Female *dīkṣā-gurus*) is not the same as VDG (*vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-gurus*). So, if higher standards are maintained why can't *vaiṣṇavīs* become *dīkṣā-gurus*?

Answer: The terminology of VDG (*vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-gurus*) is not preferred by us, because *ācāryas* like Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa use the term “*stri*” (women), not “*vaiṣṇavī*” when discussing who among *vaiṣṇavas* is fit to become guru. In his commentary to SB 1.13.15, it is clear that women who are in fact *vaiṣṇavīs* are being considered. Furthermore the SAC 2005 paper itself uses the term “Female *dīkṣā-gurus*” in its text and its title. Nobody back then thought the SAC was misguided or demeaning toward women. The fact is that the characteristic of being female is central to this dispute. But renaming it *vaiṣṇavī-dīkṣā-guru* is an Orwellian corruption of language that obfuscates rather than clarifies. Hence, we prefer the term FDG (female *dīkṣā-guru*), because it clearly conveys the concept under dispute.

But more importantly, a fundamental premise of our response is that we must understand that *śāstra* is the center for all kinds of knowledge about dharma. Saintly persons and guru are also sources, but their source is *śāstra*: “The *śāstra* is the center for all.” (Cc *Madhya* 20.352)

The reason why *śāstra* is in the center is that dharma is something that only comes from Kṛṣṇa – *dharmam tu śākṣād bhagavat pranītam* (SB 6.3.19). One cannot get dharma by direct experience or by reasoning about it. Dharma cannot come from any other source than the Lord, or from those who know the

Lord. Therefore as per SB 7.11.7, *dharma mūlam hi bhagavān sarva veda mayo hariḥ smṛtim ca tad vidam*, “The Supreme Lord is the root of the Vedas and the memory of the great sages.” Hence, there are fundamentally two main sources of knowledge of dharma – *śāstra* and those who know the *śāstra*.

That distinction between *śāstra* and those who know the *śāstra* (dharma and dharma-jna) is important because when it becomes necessary to resolve doubts about what *śāstra* or some recognized *ācārya* has said, then it is necessary that the words of the *ācārya* are understood in light of the *śāstra*, not the other way around. Examples of Śrīla Prabhupāda employing this principle are found in SB 1.3.15 and also SB 6.19.13 purports and others. “*Śāstra* as the center for all” is important as it underlies most of the differences between the pro-FDG and anti-FDG camps in how we are understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions.

Question: The SB 4.12.32 purport says being a woman, specifically Dhruva’s mother, Suniti could not be a *dikṣā-guru*. Should the rules of VDG be applied instead of FDG?

Answer: It is woman, not mother, because Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his purport quoting *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* says “woman.”²

Gender equality argument - refuted

Question: We see that this gender equality thing is fairly widespread. Even in India, we have seen how Her Excellency, the President and others, former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi

2 tathā ca viduraḥ kaniṣṭho ‘pi. śūdro ‘pi sākṣād-dharma-rājatvena pratyakṣī-kṛta-pareśāt tasya tad-upadeṣṭṛtvam iti. ata eva bhāradvāja-saṁhitāyām strī-śūdrādīnāṁ tan niṣidhya sākṣātkṛta-para-tattvānāṁ teṣāṁ tad āha

“And so, though Vidura was younger [to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and] though he was a śūdra [by birth], because he was Dharmarāja himself, he had directly realized the Supreme Lord; therefore, he instructed Dhṛtarāṣṭra. It is for this reason that the Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā forbids women, śūdras and the like from becoming gurus and allows women, śūdras and the like who have directly realized the Supreme Truth to become gurus.”

and various chief ministers, are also of the female gender. Why can't we have lady gurus within ISKCON?

Answer: Śrīla Prabhupāda considered having women as executive leaders to be an unfortunate situation; as evidenced from his purport to SB 4.16.23 (emphasis ours):

It is very appropriate to compare a powerful king like Pṛthu to a lion. In India, kṣatriya kings are still called *siṅgh*, which means "lion." Unless rogues, thieves, and other demoniac people in a state are afraid of the executive head, who rules the kingdom with a strong hand, there cannot be peace or prosperity in the state. **Thus it is most regrettable when a woman becomes the executive head instead of a lionlike king.** In such a situation the people are considered very unfortunate. [SB 4.16.23]

Because bad social customs are popular doesn't mean we too should follow them. Just like in the *samudrā-mathnan* pastime (Churning of the Ocean of Milk), the demons wanted Lord Viṣṇu in His Mohinī-mūrti incarnation to decide who gets nectar, but on the Lord's order, the demigods sat far away from all of that. How the demons dealt with Mohinī-mūrti and with each other speaks to our current times.

So, why should we not follow in the footsteps of the Devatas? We should follow in their footsteps. We shouldn't be swayed by social fads, however permanent they may seem at the time. And for those following the news, it is easy to see that we are just one nuclear exchange away from living in a world where women will be more than happy to let men be totally in charge of their material welfare, thereby crashing down the present world order in a single moment. Hence, we better continue following *sanātana-dharma* even if the rest of the world does not like it.

Comment: The whole western world believes in gender equality. Is very hard to preach in the west, if you have a kind of gender inequality as your standard.

Answer: The difficulty in preaching in the western world can be easily explained by the preachers being on a lower platform

of spiritual realization. If one is a *kaniṣṭha-adhikāri*, then one's spiritual vision is tainted with material conceptions. That is why *kaniṣṭhas* are called materialistic devotees. So, it is natural that they will think in terms of material adjustments like: “if we have female gurus then everyone will rush to us.” One can find all sorts of females in guru positions in churches and temples in the west. So, the American / European devotee leaders want to become just another, socially left-leaning religious institution competing with other socially left-leaning religious institutions. They are already pandering to the liberal agenda. But they just don't get that their dismal results are *because* they are doing things like that.

An *uttama-adhikāri*, like Śrīla Prabhupāda, because he sees everything and everyone related to Kṛṣṇa, knows how to inspire and engage such people perfectly. Hare Kṛṣṇa explosions are to be expected with *uttama-adhikāri* resident-of-Kṛṣṇa-loka devotee preachers. *Kaniṣṭha* and *madhyama-adhikāris* have to be much more humble about what kind of results they can expect. They do NOT (yet) see everyone and everything connected with Kṛṣṇa, and so they make all sorts of bad decisions.

FAQ on the “Sunīti argument” [SB 4.12.32 purport]

In the caste-by-birth system were women initiated?

Question: In the caste by birth *varṇāśrama* society that Suniti and Dhruva lived in during *satya yuga*, women did not take initiation at all. It was considered enough for them to follow the directions of their husband who was seen as their guru. So, at that time women and mothers could not be *dikṣā-gurus* as they were not initiated, thus they were not able to give a mantra which they were never initiated into themselves.

Answer: Please provide proof that women were not initiated in *satya-yuga*. We have already explained in the introductory sections the history of the *pāñcarātra* scriptures and different systems of initiation in different *yugas*. The *pāñcarātra-āgama* system of initiations like the *vaidika* system was present in *satya*

yuga as stated and established in the previous sections. We also note that the main exponent of the *pāñcarātra-āgama* is Nārada Muni who was the guru of Dhruva Mahārāja, the son of Sunīti. Thus, women in *satya-yuga* had the facility to be initiated via *pāñcarātra* as *pāñcarātra* allows for women and śūdras to be initiated via *pañca-saṁskāra* – ūrdhva-puṇḍra, *tāpa*, *dāsya-nāma*, *mantra*, and *yāga*. The *varṇa* detection process is not specific to any time, place, circumstance, or *yuga*. It is neither determined solely by birth nor solely by qualities.³ Just as it is true that everyone, including women, in all *yugas* were able to take *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā*, it is also true that no women, as a rule, in any *yuga*, ever acted as *dīkṣā-gurus*.

Strī-dharma applies to all the *yugas* and not just in *satya-yuga* and it does not change from time to time. One should follow the Vedic scriptures to know what dharma is applicable for a particular age. In *kali-yuga strī-dharma* is very much applicable as it was in all other *yugas*. So, in all *yugas* a woman's dharma is to follow the directions of her husband who was seen as her guru and by following *strī-dharma* of following her guru-husband or her qualified son she could go back to Godhead.

Sunīti could not perform the yuga-dharma, so can she be a guru?

Question: According to the purport to SB 4.12.33,⁴ Suniti, as a woman could not go to the forest and could not execute austerities and penances, therefore she was not able to perform the *yuga-dharma* for that *yuga* (Satya) and could not act as a *dīkṣā-guru*. In *kali-yuga* a woman can perform the *yuga-dharma* of chanting the holy name, so, why can't a women of *kali-yuga* act as a *dīkṣā-guru*?

3 In *satya-yuga*, Lord Rṣabhadeva's sons were all born *kṣatriyas*, but 80 of them became *brāhmaṇas*. Viśvāmitra, a *treata-yuga* resident, was a *kṣatriya* by birth but later on became a *brahmaṁṣi* and even gave us the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra. So, to say that in the past *varṇāśrama* was based on caste by birth alone is false.

4 "Although Suniti was an instructor to Dhruva Mahārāja, she could not go to the forest because she was a woman, nor could she execute austerities and penances as Dhruva Mahārāja did." – SB 4.12.33 purport

Answer: The confusion seems to be arising because the inquirer assumes that anyone who can not perform his or her *yuga-dharma* is not eligible to become a *dikṣā-guru*. This assumption is wrong because it is not that women in *satya-yuga* could not become a *dikṣā-guru* because they could not retire to forest like men. In all yugas, according to *pāñcarātra* injunctions women, with the exception of those who are self-realized, can not become a *dikṣā-guru*.

Many women personalities like Gāndhari, Lopamudra, the wife of Agastya, Devahūtī etc., accompanied their husbands to the forest to practice austerities in different *yugas*. In addition, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.3.32-45 Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Devakī and Vasudeva that in their previous lives as Sutapa and Pṛṣṇi they performed very severe austerities for 12,000 celestial years (1 *mahāyuga*) to attain Kṛṣṇa as their child. Although they successfully executed their *yuga-dharma*, none of them acted in the capacity of a *dikṣā-guru* because they also followed their *strī-dharma*, which is to never be independent and be protected by her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and by her adult sons in her old age.

In summary, as far as attaining the highest goal of human life of going back home back to Godhead is concerned, anyone, including women, in any *yuga* can go back to Godhead by simply performing their specific dharma – for men it is the *varṇāśrama-dharma* and for women it is the *strī-dharma*.

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FDG: “Yes, very rare”

In this section, we present some additional information that is relevant to the main body of our text and contains some additional details.

Śrīla B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja quoted by the SAC

Just as Śrīla Prabhupāda did, Śrīla B. R. Śrīdhara Swami also conceded that women of the caliber of Jāhnavā-mātā, the wife of Nityānanda Prabhu, could become a *dīkṣā-guru*. But he qualified his statement by adding that they were rare: **“Yes, very rare. The number can be counted on fingers, lady ācāryas.”**

Since both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Śrīdhara Swami said that for a woman to become a *dīkṣā-guru* was “very rare,” why has the SAC ignore this point? While paying mere lip service to statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Śrīdhara Swami—that such instances were very rare—the SAC has recommended a drastically lower prerequisite for women to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. Acceptance of this lower standard would contravene the historical rarity of women functioning in the role of *dīkṣā-guru*. The SAC then averts the issue of qualification by stating, “It is difficult to ascertain someone’s level of *bhakti*.” If this is indeed a fact, then logically the SAC should be **more cautious** and conservative, not less so, about recommending for ISKCON a new practice, not in accord with the standard prescribed duties for women. Exceptions to the rule must be enacted in a truly exceptional circumstances, and not whimsically. In such matters, common sense wisdom dictates: “If not fully certain, don’t do it.”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja derogated female gurus

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja tells us that after Jāhnavā-mātā several female gurus appeared in her line but because they were not exceptions to the rule, as was Jāhnavā-mātā, they delivered “dead mantras:”

“But their mantra is dead. We are after a living mantra ... We have to follow the spirit. Otherwise, after Jāhnavā-devī, the wife of Lord Nityānanda, up to Bipina Bihārī Gosvāmī, from

whom Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took initiation, there are so many unknown lady gurus. Through them, the mantra came to Bipina Bihārī Gosvāmī, and from him, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura received the mantra. We accept Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura but **should we count all those ladies in our disciplic succession? What was their realization?**"

It seems clear that Śrīdhara Mahārāja's disparaging of these lady gurus was to add weight to the proposition that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *dikṣā* by Bipina Bihārī Gosvāmī was at best insignificant. But why? Because those ladies were not of the stature of Jāhnavā-devī (and therefore should not have been *dikṣā-gurus* in the first place), and hence delivered "dead mantras."¹

The implication of Śrīdhara Mahārāja is clear: we should not repeat that same mistake and create another *apa-sampradāya* of lady gurus.

Why was Jāhnavā-devī an exception?

When Jāhnavā-devī took up the role of *dikṣā-guru* five hundred years ago, the social conditions in India were much more stable than in today's globalized Western *varna-sankara* society. Five hundred years ago, women accepted that they needed protection and dependence upon guardians. In today's *varna-sankara* societies, it is unsafe for everyone, especially women, due to the unlimited freedom given to individuals and to the resultant false feeling of independence that is engendered. Five hundred years ago, people had more respect for women and would treat all women as mothers. But nowadays, the situation has degraded to the opposite state: instead of all women being treated as mothers, practically all women are regarded as free objects/agents for sexual pleasure, be it gross or **subtle**.

We must also remember that only **after** Nityānanda Prabhu had already completed His *lila* did Jāhnavā-devī assume the role of a *dikṣā-guru*—**to continue her husband's mission**—for,

1 For full text: <https://tinyurl.com/ckky3ze6>

as an exalted chaste wife and disciple of her husband, she felt duty-bound to do so. After all, She is the Goddess of fortune (hence, most exceptional) and was expected to continue her husband’s mission. Thus, She became a prominent figure in a natural sequence of events. But again, her situation was most exceptional. Nor was this the first time that the Goddess of fortune had become an ācārya. The *adi-guru* in the Śrī sampradāya is Śrīdevī Herself. But after Her, we know of no other bonafide female *dīkṣā-gurus* in that line.

Today’s social conditions are most degraded but even in the best of times these roles of *dīkṣā-guru* or *sannyasa* for women are not supported by śāstra or previous Vaiṣṇava ācāryas. Jāhnavā-devī’s situation was unique even for the more socially stable past; Her assuming the role of *dīkṣā-guru* after the departure of Prabhu Nityānanda must not be artificially imitated.

SAC ignored Jāhnavā-devī and others were exceptional.

Unfortunately, the SAC did not even superficially discuss the remarkably unique position of Jāhnavā-devī or the other few bonafide female *dīkṣā-gurus*. Why were they exceptions to the norm? If we analyze why Jāhnavā-mātā and a few others were so exceptional and then strictly apply that standard (as required by *mimamsa*) for judging whether a certain vaiṣṇavi is exceptional, **this process will completely nullify the conclusions drawn by the SAC.** Rather than strictly defining the criteria for being an exception such as Jāhnavā-devī, the SAC simply ignored the reasons why such vaiṣṇavis were so extraordinary. Instead, by fiat, the SAC created its standard for determining “rareness,” a standard that turns rare into something relatively commonplace. This raises disturbing questions. Why did they do this? Was it just innocent incompetence? Or, were they eliminating an obstacle to a predetermined goal? In any case, the creator of dharma is Kṛṣṇa and Vedic scriptures (examples cited below), not the SAC:²

2 For Manu’s opinion on the position of women, see *Manu-saṁhitā* 5.147–9.

*dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam na vai vidur ṛṣayo nāpi devāḥ
na siddha-mukhyā asurā manuṣyāḥ kuto nu vidyādhara-cāraṇādayaḥ*

“Real religious principles are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although fully situated in the mode of goodness, even the great ṛṣis who occupy the topmost planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of Siddhaloka, to say nothing of the asuras, ordinary human beings, Vidyādhara and Cāraṇa. “Bhāgavatam 6.3.19

“No person, even if he be very learned, should express a decisive opinion all by himself, regarding the disputed points of dharma. The way of dharma is very subtle. It has many exceptions and is inscrutable. Excepting Svāyambhuva Manu, none of the devās and sages can pronounce a judgment on dharma.” *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.57.112

Taking into account Lord Kṛṣṇa’s statements (BG 2.47, 3.20–23, 35, and 18.47), we conclude that even a liberated soul performs their prescribed duties for the edification of others; that to be an exception to this standard one must at the very least be at the liberated state; and (in the case of women) that even among liberated vaiṣṇavis only a rare few would qualify as an exception to act as a *dīkṣā-guru*. When we examine Jāhnavā-mātā, we understand that not only is she a *nitya-siddha* but she is also in the category of *lakṣmi-tattva* (being the eternal consort of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, who is Himself *visnu-tattva*). This is indeed a very extraordinary situation, and is within the strictest limits. Yet, when we compare the SAC’s guidelines with the *mīmāṃsa* definition of what constitutes a bonafide exception, we are disappointed and find cause to question how such absurd conclusions were arrived at especially as it seems to be a pattern of behavior for the SAC.

Varṇa-āśrama-gender

Varṇāśrama-dharma and Vaiṣṇava-dharma:

*na calati nija-varṇa-dharmato yaḥ
sama-matir ātma-suhṛd-vipakṣa-pakṣe
na harati na hanti kiñcid uccaiḥ
sthita-manasaṁ tam avehi viṣṇu-bhaktam*

He who does not abandon his specific varṇa-dharma, who is equipoised, who is a well-wisher to his enemies, who do not steal, who does not injure anyone, and who is steady in his mind, is understood as a Viṣṇu-bhakta. [Viṣṇu Purāṇa 3.7.20]

Vaiṣṇava-dharma or a duty of a devotee includes abiding by *varṇāśrama-dharma*. This section of our book establishes the proper understanding of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and the importance of its application in a society of devotees. The summary of this section is as stated below:

- saṁskāra is the lynchpin:
- varṇa classification: Men are classified by varṇāśrama-dharma and women are governed by strī-dharma and they adopt their husband's varṇa.
- daiva-varṇāśrama: The society which acts exclusively for the satisfaction of Lord Viṣṇu.
- āsūri-varṇāśrama: A society that neglects *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas* and/or a society that adopts vaidika-mārga practices such as karma-khāṇḍa, and/or adopts the māyāvāda principles and/or impersonal ideals of *śāstra* but rejects exclusive surrender to Lord Viṣṇu.
- varṇa detection: Whereas a man's varṇa is determined primarily by quality especially when saṁskāras are broken (such as in kali-yuga) but in all circumstances, a woman's dharma is primarily governed by the physical symptom of liṅga (her gender) and her varṇa is based on her husband's varṇa at vivāha-saṁskāra (marriage ceremony).
- Resolving misconceptions about varṇāśrama.

***Saṁskāra* is the lynchpin**

Saṁskāra refers to all purificatory activities performed in the present life. Since the activities of man's current life determine his next life, *saṁskāras* also denote a man's activities in his previous lives (*purva-saṁskāras*). In that context, it also determines one's *varṇa* in this and future births. One may be born as a *śūdra* in the present life but if he were to cultivate and exhibit the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*, then he should be accepted as such and he shall be eligible to practice the *saṁskāras* of a *brāhmaṇa* after duly being initiated by a bonafide spiritual master into the *vaiṣṇava-saṁpradāya* as prescribed in *pāñcarātra-vidhi*. After *pāñcarātra-dikṣā* and with the permission of his spiritual master, he may practice appropriate *saṁskāras* so that his children are born into those *saṁskāras*, thus leading to a restoration of *varṇa* detection by birth as well.

The first and foremost point to understand is that *varṇa* refers to four categories of "men." Women don't have a *varṇa* apart from that of their husbands (or their protectors) *varṇa*. This has been substantiated by statements from *Vālmiki-Rāmāyana* and numerous *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas*. In the verse from *Vālmiki-Rāmāyana*, cited below, Mother Sītā states that although each person accumulates their pious deeds and achieves good fortune on their own, as a wife (woman) she has no separate existence other than to follow her husband and, in that way, she accumulates and gets more good fortune:

*ārya putra pitā mātā bhrātā putraḥ tathā snuṣā
svāni puṇyāni bhunjānāḥ svam svam bhāgyam upāsate*

"Oh, noble prince! Father, mother, brother, son, and daughter-in-law accomplish their existence and good fortune, as benefitted by their pious deeds." [2-27-3]

*bhartur bhāgyam tu bhāryā ekā prāpnoti puruṣa ṛṣabha
ataḥ caiva aham ādiṣṭā vane vastavyam iti api*

"Oh, Rama the best of men! However, the wife for one gets the fortune of the husband. For that reason, I am also destined to dwell in the forest." [2-27-4]

*na pitā na ātmajo na ātmā na mātā na sakhī janah
iha pretya ca nārīṇām patir eko gatiḥ sadā*

“To a woman, father or son or self or mother or female companion are not the recourse. Husband alone is forever the best recourse either in this world or after her death”. [2-27-5]

The above verses from *Vālmīki-Rāmāyana* are the basis for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s emphasis on the topic of the *varṇa* of women and their role in society and family life. The following excerpt from one of his lectures further elaborates this point:

And when the Gāyatrī mantra is offered to men, they are offered also sacred thread, and girls, are not offered sacred thread. If their husband is a brāhmaṇa, she automatically becomes brāhmaṇa because wife is considered to be the half, better half. She is the better portion. So she automatically becomes better brāhmaṇa. [laughter] So better brāhmaṇa does not require any thread. There is a Bengali proverb, *ya va nauket poiye darkana naya*[?]. The proverb is that in India if one has got sacred thread, he is immediately understood that he must be belonging to the higher caste, brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiṣya. But if somebody knows that he is brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya, he doesn’t require to show the sacred thread. Similarly, the wives of brāhmaṇa is already known that he [she] is brāhmaṇi, so she does not require to show the sacred thread. So don’t be sorry because you will not be offered the sacred thread. [chuckles] That’s all right.³

***Saṁskāra* and *varṇa* determination**

How is the *varṇa* of a person determined? The answer to this important question is contained in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions regarding Vedic *saṁskāras*, of which the *garbhā-dāna-saṁskāra* is the most vital and significant one. From various sections of the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda both written and spoken, we find that of all *saṁskāras*, he placed the highest prominence and heaviest emphasis on the *garbhā-dāna-saṁskāra*. In his purport to SB 1.4.25, he points out that those

3 —Initiations and Gāyatrī of Devotees, Going to London—August 11, 1968, Montreal, 680811IN-MONTREAL. [38:50 Minutes]

who have not undergone the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, or spiritual family planning, are not accepted as being of an actual twice-born family and that even though such children are born in spiritually cultured families, they will only be considered as *dvija-bandhus* who are classified with the *śūdras* and the woman class, who are by nature less intelligent.⁴ It is not to suggest that we revert back to the *varṇa* by birth system but we have to understand that since *saṁskāras* are not being followed at present times *varṇa* is mainly determined by quality. The *Skanda-purāṇa* Vol.18 Book VI, Nagar-kāṇḍa, Chapter 239, Verse 31-34 states:

janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ saṁskārāt dvija ucyate
veda-pāṭhāt bhavet vipraḥ brahma jānāti brāhmaṇaḥ

By birth, everyone is Śūdra (lower caste), by accepting *Saṁskāra* (Purificatory process) one becomes a *Dvijha* (Twice Born), By the study of Veda one becomes *Vipra*, and the knower of *Brahman* is a *Brāhmaṇa*.

So, once we determine *varṇa* by quality, the next step is to restore respective *saṁskāras*, starting with the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra* which will gradually (over a few generations) guarantee that the future generations are born with good *saṁskāras* in the establishment of *daiva-varṇāśrama*. If *saṁskāras*, especially the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, are not followed then one automatically becomes converted into the lower class of society (śūdra).⁵

Hence, *saṁskāras* are the lynchpins of the superior *daiva-varṇāśrama* system that allows the process of determining *varṇa* by *guṇa* and karma. Karma includes *prārabdha* or results of past life activities that are currently manifest in one's life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda on varṇa determination process

A common confusion regarding *varṇāśrama-dharma* among devotees is whether *varṇa* is determined by birth or by quality or both. *Varṇa* is not a birthright to be primarily determined by birth alone. This is a huge topic that would require a book of its

4 Purport to SB 1.4.25

5 Bhagavad-gītā 7.11–13, April 5, 1971, Bombay: <https://tinyurl.com/2ncppm2k>

own and it is not the purpose of this writing to go over those fine details.

There are numerous places in his books and other teachings wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized the need to restore proper *saṁskāras* aimed at creating first-class *brāhmaṇas* or *vaiṣṇavas*. *Varṇa* is primarily determined by the performance of the first ceremony for purification known as *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra* or the ritual meant for purification of the mother's womb. In the following excerpt, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that it is possible to produce the children of desired *varṇa* (*varṇa* by birth):

A child who is begotten out of lust may not turn out as the parents desire. As stated in the *sāstras*, *yathā yonir yathā bījam*. *Yathā yoniḥ* indicates the mother, and *yathā bījam* indicates the father. If the mental state of the parents is prepared before they have sex, the child which they will beget will certainly reflect their mental condition. [SB 4.22.53 purport]

Hence, when proper *saṁskāras* are in place then *varṇa* can be determined by birth. Although this process is broken in Kali-yuga, by employing the detection of *varṇa* through symptoms and by re-establishing a society based on *varṇāśrama-dharma* it is possible to restore the *saṁskāras*. In his purport to SB 4.31.10, Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates that according to the Vedic system *śaukra-janma*, or “taking birth by seminal discharge,” is facilitated by adopting the ceremony known as *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra* before the father and mother unite. In that purport, he also states that in this age of Kali, everyone is *śūdra* due to the absence of the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*. Hence, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that anyone with a little tendency to become Kṛṣṇa conscious can be transformed to become a *brāhmaṇa* or *dvija*, simply by the *pāñcarātri-vidhi* initiation process.

In summary, when the *saṁskāras* are in place, *varṇa* will be determined by birth. In those cases, a *brahmaṇa*'s son will grow up to become a *brahmaṇa*. However, when *saṁskāras* are absent and not followed as per Vedic injunctions, as is the case in the

present age of Kali-yuga, the *varṇa* of the new-born will need to be determined not by mere birth but by observing the *lakṣaṇās* or qualities be based on the system of *pāñcarātri-vidhi*. By determining the *varṇa* through *lakṣaṇās*, and as gradually the *saṁskāras* are restored over a few generations, *varṇa* by birth can be restored.

Varṇa classification and detection

Determining *varṇa* by birth becomes extremely complex due to lack of or discontinuation of *saṁskāras*, and due to mixed *varṇa* marriages. Therefore, in those cases, the *śāstra* recommend that *varṇa* to be determined by *guṇa* or qualities. Based on the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda the general understanding is that in Kali-yuga, *varṇa* is determined by symptoms or quality, not by birth alone. Nonetheless, in Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, examples of which are cited below, we find that he has emphasized and highlighted the importance of restoring *saṁskāras* and *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

A person born in the Brahmana family, if he is well-qualified with the brahminical qualities, it is very good, welcome.⁶

In the purports to *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.41 and 6.42, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that to be born into a family that follows the *saṁskāras* without any interruption or deviation is very beneficial for one's spiritual progress. In that purport, he cites the example of his spiritual master and his birth in a family of great devotees and transcendentalists.

The classification of *varṇa* and its detection is a complex subject. With this basic understanding as a foundation, one can understand the tenets of *sa-varṇa* (of the same *varṇa*) and *asa-varṇa* (of mixed classes) that help further to determine the actual *varṇa* of a child at birth. In *sa-varṇa* marriages, performed according to proper Vedic *saṁskāras*, the *varṇa* of the child born is determined by the *varṇa* of the father, whereas in *asa-varṇa* the determination of *varṇa* of a child is complex and depends on

6 Letter to G.L.Nanda, June 14, 1975. <https://tinyurl.com/mkns9u45>

a variety of factors ranging from *anuloma-pratiloma* marriages⁷ and the hierarchy of *varṇas* within those marriages.⁸

An elaborate discussion on the *varṇa* classification and detection processes is essential to understand the intricacies of this topic, however this is not the intended purpose of this presentation.

Daiva-varṇāśrama versus Āsuri-varṇāśrama

What do the terms *daivi-varṇāśrama* and *āsuri-varṇāśrama* mean? Although these terms are not explicitly defined in *śāstras*, Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used them in specific contexts that clarify their meaning. An activity may be classified broadly as *Daivi-varṇāśrama* or *Āsuri-varṇāśrama*:

Any activity that is per scriptural injunctions and *sādhū-guru-śāstra-vākyas* and that which is done for the pleasure of the Lord is “*daiva*,” or divine. Activities that are performed as part of *varṇāśrama* but with the goal of pleasing Lord Viṣṇu are considered *daiva-varṇāśrama*.⁹ In another lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the perfection of life is to adopt the *daiva-varṇāśrama* system:

So *manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye* [Bg. 7.3]. ***Siddhaye means to enter into the institution of daiva-varṇa and āśrama. That is called siddhi.*** Otherwise animals. And *yatatām api siddhānām* [Bg. 7.3]. Those who are engaged in the four orders of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, out of them, *yatatām api siddhānām*. Those who are actually in the position of a *brāhmaṇa*, actually in the position of a *kṣatriya*, *siddhānām*... They are called *siddha*.¹⁰

7 *Anuloma* – Husband is of higher *varṇa*; *Pratiloma* – Wife is of higher *varṇa*. Hierarchy of *varṇa* – *brāhmaṇa* is highest followed by *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*.

8 *samānavarṇāsu putrāḥ savarṇā bhavanti anulomāsu mātṛsavarṇāḥ pratilomāsv āryavigarhitāḥ*

A Son born to parents of the same *varṇa* will be of the same *varṇa*. In the case of *anuloma* marriages, the son will take on the *varṇa* of the mother, whereas *pratiloma* marriages are condemned by civilized persons. [Viṣṇu-smṛti -16.1-3]

9 Lecture Bhagavad-gītā 1.20, July 17, 1973, London

10 <https://tinyurl.com/mr3dbemb>

Any activity that disrespects and/or disregards the Supreme Lord and *śāstra-sādhū-guru-vākyas* including *Manu-saṁhita* etc. is considered āsura-varṇāśrama. If the activity is against *vaidika-vidhi* (and or) *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* then that activity is certainly a part of āsura-varṇāśrama.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam on Varṇa determination process

The process of determination of *varṇa* by birth and by quality is described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.11.13–35). In this series of verses, the characteristics of men and women along with their respective dharmas or duties are also described. The following is a summary of teachings from these series of verses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

1. Starting from verse 13, the nature (*guṇa*) and occupational duties (*karma* or *vṛtti*) of men are described in detail. SB 7.11.35 mentions that if the qualities or symptoms of a certain class are observed in someone who is born in a different class, then he should be accepted as belonging to the *varṇa* indicated by his personal symptoms.
2. These *Bhāgavatam* verses present several key factors that comprise the qualities or symptoms. They are birth (*jāti-bhedam*), family (*kula-bhedam*), gender (*liṅga-bhedam*), quality and work (*guṇa-kṛiyāḥ*), time-place-circumstances (*deśa-kālau nāvasthān*). Among the symptoms, some are physical such as birth or *jāti* and gender or *liṅgam*.
3. SB verses 7.11.25–29 mention that the qualities and duties of a woman, starting with chastity, and all other details are tightly coupled with a woman's duty of serving her husband. In verse 29, it is stated that a woman who serves her husband, mentally accepting him as equal to Lord Hari following the footsteps of Mother Lakṣmī, returns home back to Godhead along with her devotee husband. This verse proves that a woman, by simply remaining completely devoted to her husband (*pati-guru* or *bhartari*) and by executing her prescribed duties as per *strī-dharma*,

can attain Godhead along with her husband and her dependants.¹¹

4. Hence, the symptom of the women's class is determined only by physical gender or *liṅgam*. A woman is not identified as belonging to a *varṇa* independent of her husband. Hence, the primary characteristic or identifying *lakṣaṇa* for women is the *liṅga-bhedam*. All other symptoms of a woman are dependent on this primary *lakṣaṇa*.

Are devotees, especially women, different from ordinary people? Can we say that *vaiṣṇavas* or devotees, in general, are beyond *varṇāśrama* and are not required to follow *varṇāśrama-dharma*? The answer is no; since the *śāstras* and *ācāryas* instruct us that as long as we are not in a liberated state and are practicing devotees on the path of liberation, we are required to follow *varṇāśrama-dharma*. However, as SB 7.11.29 states whether a woman is married to a higher or lower-class man if he surrenders to the Lord as a devotee and if she serves him seeing him as the Lord then they both attain liberation.

In summary, there are two types of *varṇa* detection process: 1) physical symptoms by *jāti* (birth) and *vṛtti* (activities). 2) by *lakṣaṇa* (symptoms or qualities of four *varṇas*) and *vṛtti* (activities).

- For men: With *saṁskāras* broken due to the ill-effects of Kali-yuga detection of *varṇa* by physical symptoms by *jāti* (birth) is not possible and hence it is determined primarily by symptoms at a subtle level i.e., through *lakṣaṇa* (symptoms or qualities of four *varṇas*). In a *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, a boy is sent to *gurukula* at the age of five and the guru determines his *varṇa*. Depending upon the boy's nature or *varṇa* he is awarded the *upanayana* or sacred thread ceremony at the age of 7,9, or 11 depending on whether he is a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, or *vaiśya* respectively. For a *śūdra* the only *saṁskāra* is a marriage ceremony, nonetheless he is

11 Śrīla Madhvācārya states “*strīṇāṁ bhartari bhāvanā*” – See SB 7.11.29 purport

considered within the varṇāśrama society and he must serve the other three varṇas.

- For women: The physical symptom (liṅga) dictates her predominating or primary dharma of stri-dharma or stri-karma and hence they do not have a varṇa and they take on the varṇa of their protectors (husbands). A girl child in a daiva-varṇāśrama society is primarily trained in household chores and the appropriate Vedic cultural aspects associated with the management of the household. The first and the only saṁskāra for a girl child is the marriage ceremony at which time her varṇa is determined. Her primary duty is to serve her husband.

Clarifications to Misconceptions

There are major misconceptions regarding the *varṇāśrama* system that are very prevalent among the league of ISKCON devotees, which causes some of them, often those from western backgrounds to be averse to the idea of the implementation of *varṇāśrama-dharma* within ISKCON society.

“Varṇāśrama means smārta practices” – refuted

What is the meaning of the word *smārta*? And what are *smārta* practices? The word *smārta* is the most commonly misunderstood term amongst many ISKCON devotees. Irrespective of western or eastern background, it is not trivial to the devotees the real understanding of the term *smārta* and hence that in itself is a cause for great confusion. The term *smārta* refers to the followers of *smṛti*. Are vaiṣṇavas not followers of *smṛti* and in that sense are they also not *smārta*? *Smārta* is not the problem – the problem is that some followers of *smṛti* misinterpret the scriptures, such as *Manu-smṛti*, by mixing the proper understanding with *māyāvāda* conceptions. For example, in one of his correspondences, Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

As for bathing the deities in milk from time to time that is not required. The smarta or caste brahmanas, they think if someone inattentively touches deity it becomes impure, so they bathe. But that is not needed by us, only when they are installed.¹²

Śrīla Prabhupāda has para-phrased the scriptural injunctions that states that Lord Kṛṣṇa being the absolute truth and completely spiritual, is non-different from His Deity form and hence can never become impure. However, by referring to, “*smarta* or caste *brahmanas*,” Śrīla Prabhupāda exposes the *māyāvādi* followers of *smṛti*, who super-imposing *māyāvāda* misconceptions, think that the non-manifested *brahmān*, although spiritual, becomes contaminated when manifested in the material world as a deity and hence is not completely spiritual.

In his purport to Śrī *Caitanta Caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 25.42, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the position of great ācāryas, who sometimes conceal the real purport of the Vedas to bring the atheists under their control, just as Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya established the predominance of one’s spiritual identity and convinced the *pāṣaṇḍas* or atheists to accept the Vedas and Vedic injunctions. However, the followers of Śaṅkarācārya did not understand this secret and in the name of following *smṛti*, indeed hijacked the very terminology and practices of *smārta* and mixed them with *māyāvāda* conceptions. Hence, to remove such *māyāvāda* misconceptions, Vaiṣṇava ācāryas had to isolate the *māyāvāda-smārtas* and their practices by terming all such misconceived practices as *smārta* practices.

For example, the common misunderstanding is that *Śārīraka-bhāṣya* refers exclusively to Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. The *Brahma-sūtras* are also referred to as *Śārīraka-sūtras* and Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary on the *Śārīraka-sūtras* is referred to as *Śārīraka-bhāṣya*. In one sense all the ācāryas’ commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* can

12 Letter to: Kirtanananda, Oct. 27, 1972, Vrindaban – <https://tinyurl.com/3kc9ur93>

be called Śārīraka-bhāṣya. However, since the term Śārīraka-bhāṣya is already associated with Śaṅkarācārya's *māyāvāda* connotations of *Brahma-sūtras*, which is antithetical to *Vaiṣṇava* devotional sentiments, *Vaiṣṇava* Ācāryas refrained from calling their respective commentaries as Śārīraka-bhāṣya.

To emphasize this fact further, let us discuss the difference between *māyāvādīs* and *brahmavādīs*. The *brahmavādīs* maintain that *Brahmān* is the Absolute Truth. In essence, these *brahmavādīs* are not averse to the personal conception of the Absolute Truth but they do not have any further information beyond the *Brahmān* conception of the Absolute Truth. However, over time the *brahmavādī* conception was completely eclipsed by the *māyāvāda* misconception, which not only denies the existence of the personal conception of the Absolute Truth, but also claims that even that impersonal *Brahmān*, when falling into the material world, comes under the control of *māyā* or illusion. For this reason, all the *Vaiṣṇava* ācāryas completely reject the *māyāvāda* conception and their practices. Some sects of *Vaiṣṇavas* do not even consider *Brahmān* realization as part of the realization of the Absolute Truth, just as *sāyujya-mukti* is not even considered as liberation by *Gauḍīya-vaiṣṇavas*.

“Lord Caitanya rejected varṇāśrama” – refuted

The devotee community within ISKCON and more so the proponents of FDG, often quote the famous conversation between Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, to conclude that Lord Caitanya rejected *varṇāśrama* as external and hence it is not applicable for the ISKCON community. However, such conclusions blatantly refute the direct order of Śrīla Prabhupāda to implement *varṇāśrama* within ISKCON. Unaware of the *pāñcarātra* methods of the *daiva-varṇāśrama* system some of these proponents wrongly declare that in Kali-yuga *varṇāśrama* is always *āsuric* in nature. Instead of researching the *pāñcarātra* texts such as the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, their reluctance, due to their attachment to mundane feminist egalitarian agendas,

causes such proponents of FDG/WDG to even boldly suggest that ISKCON should implement an amended version of the *varṇāśrama* system which is *śāstra-viruddha* (against the scriptural injunctions).

Nevertheless, the important point is that Lord Caitanya did not reject the *varṇāśrama* system but He only rejected the concept of *varṇāśrama* in itself being considered the highest goal of life (*sādhya-sādhana*).¹³ In Cc *Madhya* 9.257, Lord Caitanya contended that love of Godhead (*Kṛṣṇa-prema*) and not liberation or *mukti* is the highest goal of life,¹⁴ and hence in that context, *varṇāśrama* is not the ultimate means to attain it. In one of his conversations with his disciples after a GBC meeting, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that although *varṇāśrama* is not the desired goal, to be situated in *varṇāśrama* is a pre-requisite for the attainment of the real goal or desired goal of love of Godhead:

Prabhupāda: ... Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu, when He was speaking with Rāmānanda Rāya---you'll find in the Teachings of Lord...---as soon as he suggested *varṇāśrama-dharma*, ... immediately Caitanya... "It is not very important. If you know better than this, you go on." He did not give any, much stress on this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. But for regulated life that is required.... **So that is not very easy thing. First of all, we have to live very regulated life. Sannyāsa life is that regulated life. And then we can enter into the real life. That is idea. So anything more?**¹⁵

In another room conversation with his senior disciples on this topic titled "*Varṇāśrama* System Must Be Introduced," Śrīla Prabhupāda clarifies how to understand the position of Lord Caitanya in this regard, as cited below:

Satsvarūpa: Lord Caitanya, when Rāmānanda Rāya brought this up, He said it was not possible in this age to introduce this.

13 *Tattvavādīs* consider *varṇāśrama* to be the means for liberation, the highest goal of life (Cc *Madhya* 9.257).

14 Adapted from the article: <https://tinyurl.com/acjusbdf>

15 Conversation, March 30, 1975, Māyāpur: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8x5nrk>

Prabhupāda: Yes. Not... He did not say possible. Eho bāhya. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was interested only on the spiritual platform. He had no idea of material side. He rejected material side.

Satsvarūpa: But don't we do that also?

Prabhupāda: No. Our position is different. We are trying to implement Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everything. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally took sannyāsa. He rejected completely material. Niṣkiñcana. But we are not going to be niṣkiñcana. We are trying to cement the troubled position of the... That is also in the prescription of Bhagavad-gītā. We are not rejecting the whole society. Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected everything, ihā bāhya. Rejected meaning, "I do not take much interest in this." Bāhya. "It is external." He was simply interested in the internal, the spiritual. But our duty is that we shall arrange the external affairs all so nicely that one day they will come to the spiritual platform very easily, paving the way. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu, personality like that they have nothing to do with this material world. But we are preaching. We are preaching. Therefore we must pave the situation in such a way that gradually they will be promoted to the spiritual plane, which is not required.

Satsvarūpa: *Varṇāśrama* is not required.

Prabhupāda: Not required. Caitanya Mahāprabhu denied, "I am not brāhmaṇa, I am not kṣatriya, I am not this, I am not this." He rejected. But in the Bhagavad-gītā, the cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam [Bg. 4.13]. So we are Kṛṣṇa..., preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It must be done. [Room conversation: Feb 14, 1977, Māyāpur]

Did Śrīla Prabhupāda not want varṇāśrama?

Numerous quotations can be found in the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda that convey his desire to implement *varṇāśrama*. However, among the various reasons, the most significant is that Śrīla Prabhupāda's guru mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja Prabhupāda, wanted to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*:

My Guru Mahārāja wanted to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*.¹⁶

My Guru Mahārāja also wanted to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*. Yes. There must be the human society, not this; *daiva-varṇāśrama*, not this āsuric *varṇāśrama*. [lecture – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.29, Vṛndāvana, Nov. 16, 1976]

Prabhupāda: **...*daiva-varṇāśrama*.** My Guru Mahārāja wanted **this that there be regular *varṇāśrama***, qualified. It is not the monopoly of India that only brāhmaṇas are born there. No. No, you are all *brāhmaṇas*. Otherwise, how can I allow you to worship Deity? Hmm. What is that? [Morning walk, Los Angeles, Dec. 8, 1973]¹⁷

Sometimes we are criticized because although I am a sannyāsī I have taken part in the marriage ceremonies of my disciples. It must be explained, however that since we have started a Kṛṣṇa conscious society and since a human society must also have ideal marriages, to correctly establish an ideal society we must take part in marrying some of its members, although we have taken to the path of renunciation. This may be astonishing to persons who are not very interested in establishing *daiva-varṇāśrama*, **the transcendental system** of four social orders and four spiritual orders. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, however, **wanted to reestablish *daiva-varṇāśrama***. In *daiva-varṇāśrama* there cannot be acknowledgement of social status according to birthright because in Bhagavad-gītā it is said that the determining considerations are *guṇa* and karma, one's qualities and work. It is this *daiva-varṇāśrama* that should be established all over the world to continue a perfect society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This may be astonishing to foolish critics but it is one of the functions of a Kṛṣṇa conscious society. [SB 5.1.24 purport]

In the following statements, Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates that despite all the obstacles and imperfections his mood and

16 "Bhagavad-gītā 7.3 ... at Cross Maidan," Bombay, March 29, 1971. <https://tinyurl.com/bdht5jk>

17 <https://tinyurl.com/52n9ctwv>

mission is to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*, as per the desire and instruction of his spiritual masters.

But as far as we are concerned, we are trying to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*, as it is instructed by the Gosvāmīs, by *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, by our spiritual master. May not be very perfect but we are trying our best to introduce this *daiva-varṇāśrama*. [see footnote 170]

In one of his lectures Śrīla Prabhupāda, taking the order and desire of his Guru Mahārāja as his life and soul, gives direct instructions to his disciples to fulfill his Guru Mahārāja's instructions, which includes establishing *daiva-varṇāśrama*.¹⁸

The proponents of FDG claim that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want to introduce *varṇāśrama* within ISKCON and that he did not want to duplicate the Vedic culture all over the world. However, notwithstanding the other numerous places wherein he categorically stated the opposite to the FDG proponents' assertions, the following citations are good examples to demonstrate Śrīla Prabhupāda's keen desire to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama* for ISKCON:

So when Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya is explaining *manuṣyā* he says, *śāstra adbhikāra yajña*. Unless one is conversant with the teachings of the lessons of *śāstra*, he is not to be considered as a human being. Actually that is so, unless one comes to the principles of dharma and āśrama, one is not to be considered as a human. **So this institution the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is trying to establish this *daiva-varṇāśrama*.** *Daiva-varṇāśrama* as Kṛṣṇa says that *cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam*, what is created by Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Personality of Godhead must be applicable universally. So this *varṇāśrama-dharma* is not limited in India or to the community who are known as Hindus. Because Kṛṣṇa claimed that *sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya sambhavanti mūrtayaḥ* [Bg 14.4] all species of forms, there are 8,400,000 species of life and Kṛṣṇa claims, *aham bīja-pradaḥ pitā*.— [“Lecture, Nov.29, 1971, Vṛndāvana.”]¹⁹

18 Feb. 11, 1974, Vṛndāvana <https://tinyurl.com/kuuj3z3v>

19 <https://tinyurl.com/yc2vsd2k>

When Lord Caitanya talked with the great devotee Rāmānanda Rāya, the Lord asked him, “What is the basic principle of human life?” Rāmānanda Rāya answered that human civilization begins when varṇāśrama-dharma is accepted. Before coming to the standard of varṇāśrama-dharma there is no question of human civilization. Therefore, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to establish this right system of human civilization, which is known as Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or *daiva-varṇāśrama* – divine culture. – Science of Self-realization, ch. 3

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